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An update from PEO Soldier

Soldier Story

Changing the Look of the Army

“The uniform is more functional: It has pockets in the right places that aren’t covered up by your equipment.”


Soldier
10th Mountain Division
Ft. Drum, NY

Some Soldiers love the new Army Combat Uniform (ACU). Some are skeptical and reserving judgment until they actually see the ACU. SSG Ronald Krauklis explains, “When they see the ACU first hand and hear about its performance-enhancing improvements, their first question is, ‘When do I get mine?’”

According to SFC Jeff Myhre, PEO Soldier’s noncommissioned officer for Clothing and Individual Equipment, more than 10,000 Soldiers in Iraq are wearing the new ACU (minus the digital camouflage).

SFC Myhre is busy responding to the myriad comments received about the ACU. The issue that has generated the most comments is the method Soldiers use to place skill badges on uniforms. The original ACU design called for metal pin-on skill

badges to replace sewn-on badges, saving Soldiers the sewing costs. “The SMA got thousands of e-mails pleading with us to continue to use the sewn-on badges,” explains SFC Myhre. “So we went back to the sewn-on badges.” He says they’ve also received numerous comments questioning the switch from buttons to zippers on the front closure of the blouse. “Based on our research, we think the zipper will probably outlast the uniform,” he explains. “It launders very well.” He says that the overall favorite component of the ACU is the pockets. “Soldiers love the number and placement of the pockets,” SFC Myhre says.

Deploying units will gear up in the ACU beginning in April 2005, and Army-side fielding will be complete by December 2007. 

NEW GEAR

Soldiers Give Thumbs Up to New Enhanced Night Vision Goggle



“... the thermal imaging makes it easier to see through smoke and identify targets.”

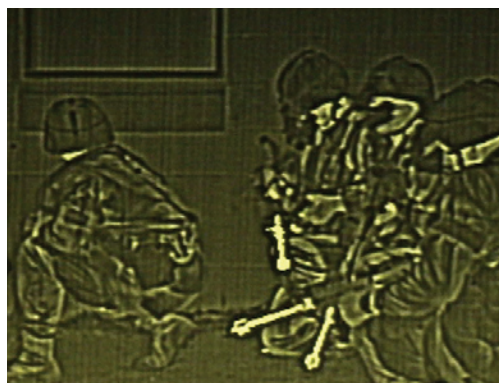
Soldier
10th Mountain Division
Ft. Drum, NY


Soldiers had nothing but praise for the new Enhanced Night Vision Goggle (ENVG) after recent customer tests at Ft. Benning, GA. “The ENVG is much better than the AN/PVS-14s because the thermal imaging makes it easier to see through smoke and identify targets,” commented one Soldier from the 10th Mountain Division. “I definitely give it the thumbs up.” Another Soldier added, “In Iraq, we conduct a lot of operations at night. Part of the problem with the AN/PVS-14s we have now is that you are momentarily blinded when you move into a light area. That doesn’t happen with the ENVGs. They react to the light so it doesn’t hurt your eyes.”

The ENVG is a helmet-mounted device that enhances Soldiers’ situational awareness and mobility, day or night, in all weather and battlefield obscurant conditions (e.g., fog, smoke). It optically overlays imagery from an image intensification tube and long-wave infrared sensor to form a combined image.

Seventy-two Soldiers from 1/15th Infantry and 5th and 6th Ranger Training Brigades participated in customer tests to evaluate the ENVG and compare it with the standard-issue AN/PVS-14 night vision device. The tests demonstrated the following:

- The ENVG does not interfere with Soldiers’ ability to complete Land Navigation or Woodland Individual Movement Techniques courses.
- Defending squads are able to successfully engage targets through smoke at longer ranges with the ENVG.
- The ENVG is superior to the AN/PVS-14 in detecting human and thermal targets.
- Hit rates on thermal targets using the ENVG are higher during night qualification weapon firing than they are using the AN/PVS-14.



Additional testing takes place this fall, with initial operational testing set to take place next year. In the future the ENVG will be upgraded to a digital package. 

A Message from BG Moran

Welcome to the inaugural issue of **Soldier Story**, the newsletter of the U.S. Army’s Program Executive Office (PEO) Soldier.

Our mission: develop, produce, field, and sustain everything that the Soldier wears, carries, and operates. **Soldier Story** provides you with an inside look at how we do that. In this issue, you will read about some of our most important initiatives—Soldiers’ reactions to the new Army Combat Uniform, testing of the new Enhanced Night Vision Goggle, and the status of our Air Warrior and Rapid Fielding Initiative programs.

The Soldier is the Face of Freedom. That’s the theme for our new communication campaign—The Face of Freedom. Our new exhibit, which highlights our latest initiatives and

showcases this theme, will make its debut at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting, October 25–27, at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. If you attend, please stop by our booth (#2305) to see examples of what we are doing for Soldiers to increase combat effectiveness and deliver products that save lives and improve quality of life.

Soldiers need and deserve the very best equipment. Our job is to provide it. Here’s our story.

Brigadier General James R. Moran
Program Executive Officer Soldier, PEO Soldier

Air Warrior System Deployed

First Integrated System for Aircrews

Army aircrews deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) are being equipped with the newly developed Air Warrior System—the new-generation aircrew ensemble that provides advanced life support, ballistic protection, and nuclear, biological, and chemical protection. Air Warrior is designed to save lives and enhance crew performance. It is combat effective, affordable, and sustainable worldwide by using a reconfigurable ensemble that increases personal protection and mission performance while decreasing weight and bulk. The Air Warrior System consists of:

- An improved, flame-retardant aviation battle dress uniform
- A primary survival gear carrier that includes various first aid, survival, signaling, and communications equipment
- Flexible body armor with a ballistic upgrade plate that will protect the aviator from multiple-hit .30 caliber armor-piercing rounds
- A microclimate cooling system—a cooling garment worn under chemical protective and duty uniforms that increases mission duration times by more than 350 percent

According to COL Richard D. Hansen, Project Manager for PM Soldier Warrior, PEO Soldier is implementing a new fielding process for the Air Warrior System. “We’re using a complete bottoms-up integration of all the requirements into a fully integrated system that allows Army aviation aircrews to train as they fight.”

Initial fielding of the Air Warrior System was set for fiscal year 2006, but operational tempo and demands to support OIF and OEF have accelerated the size and scope of production. Therefore, all units deploying, regardless of status, will be equipped with Air Warrior. The 1st, 25th, and 42nd Infantry Division Aviation Brigades and the 1-25 Stryker Brigade Combat Team have been outfitted with the Air Warrior System. The schedule for other units is as follows:

UNIT	SCHEDULED COMPLETION DATE	UNIT	TENTATIVE COMPLETION DATE
OIF3/OEF6		OIF4/OEF7	
3rd ID	November 2004	101st AA	June 2005
Theater Support	November 2004	(TBD) ACR	August 2005
18th Avn Bde	December 2004	(TBD) SBCT	August 2005
4-3 ACR	February 2005	4th ID	October 2005
Task Force OEF	February 2005	Theater Support	November 2005
		10th ID	December 2005

Warehouse to Foxhole: 9 Days

RFI Gets Equipment to Soldiers Quickly, Efficiently

Thanks to PEO Soldier's Rapid Fielding Initiative (RFI), more than 200,000 Soldiers are equipped with the finest state-of-the-art equipment the Army can buy. Every Soldier—whether regular Army, Reserve, or National Guard—deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan receives RFI equipment to enhance his or her lethality, survivability, and quality of life.

Since November 2002, RFI has expedited the process of acquiring and fielding cutting-edge equipment to ensure that Soldiers have the most current technology available through Army supply channels or directly from American industry.

The turnaround time for getting RFI equipment into Soldiers' hands, or from “warehouse to foxhole,” has improved significantly: what used to take months or years now takes as little as days or weeks from date of order to delivery to the Soldier. RFI now boasts more than 40 pieces of the most up-to-date equipment in force protection and mobility, lethality, soldier mission-essential equipment, and individual weapons and optics.

Soldiers experiencing the benefits of the new equipment are singing the praises of RFI. “Rapid Fielding Initiative is a way for Soldiers to get the latest and greatest in individual equipment,” says one Soldier from the 81st Infantry Brigade, Ft Lewis, WA. They are excited about improvements in the equipment's comfort, practicality, and survivability.

Soldiers are pleased with the equipment and grateful for it. “RFI is important ... we have the hardest job in the world, and I'm glad the Army is looking out for us,” says a Soldier from the 24th Infantry Division, Ft. Riley, KS.

According to Acting Deputy of PEO Soldier Charles Rash, the rest of the operational Army will be equipped with RFI by the end of fiscal year 2007. “We’re doing everything we can to make that goal a reality,” says Rash. ☉


RFI Fielding Summary

Through September 2004, 27 brigade combat teams and 110,000 support troops were fielded RFI equipment, including those listed below. Another 26 brigade combat teams are on track to be fielded in fiscal year 2005.

UNIT	RFI LOCATION	DATE
278th Brigade (TN ARNG)	Camp Shelby, MS	August 9–19
USASOC Civil Affairs and PSYOPS (OIF/OEF)	Ft. Bragg, NC	August 24–27
1-143rd Fire Support Element	Ft. Sill, OK	August 26
29th Brigade (HI ARNG)	Ft. Bliss, TX	August 30
56th Brigade (TX ARNG)	Ft. Hood, TX	September 1
155th Brigade (MS ARNG)	Camp Shelby, MS	September 2
2-34th Armor and EAB Soldiers	Ft. Riley, KS	September 7–9
4th Brigade 3rd ID and EAB Soldiers	Ft. Stewart, GA	September 7–15
10th SFG	Ft. Carson, CO	September 7–9
7th SFG	Ft. Bragg, NC	September 12–14
EAB Soldiers	Ft. Bragg, NC	August 13–17
3rd Brigade 3rd ID and EAB Soldiers	Ft. Benning, GA	September 14–23
11th ACR and EAB Soldiers	Ft. Irwin, CA	September 18–27
EAB Soldiers	Ft. Sill, OK	September 27–October 1
1st and 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID, and EAB Soldiers	Ft. Stewart, GA	October 4–21
EAB Soldiers	Ft. Campbell, KY	October 4–8
EAB Soldiers	Ft. Bragg, NC	October 12–18
EAB Soldiers	Camp Atterbury, IN	October 18–22

XM8 in High Demand

If you think Soldiers are the only ones excited about the XM8 Weapon System, think again. In the upcoming feature film "XXX 2: State of the Union," the XM8 will share the spotlight with actors Samuel L. Jackson and Willem Dafoe. It was also recently featured on Fox News. Gunny R. Lee Erney fired the XM8 in a recent episode of the popular History Channel show "Mail Call." And Tom Clancy's new video game, "Ghost Recon 2," gives the XM8 a prominent role.

Why all the interest? According to LTC Matthew Clarke, product manager for Individual Weapons for PEO Soldier at Picatinny Arsenal, NJ, it is because the XM8 is the weapon of the future. "The XM8 Modular Assault Weapon System is a mission-configurable, lightweight, shoulder-fired family of assault weapons capable of firing the current inventory of standard ammunition in both the semiautomatic or automatic modes," explains LTC Clarke. "In its production configuration, the XM8 Carbine variant is expected to weigh up to 30 percent less than a similarly equipped M4 Modular Assault Weapon System." 



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